

## Intersections

**Karen F. Uhlmann**

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*The thoughtful novel Intersections undertakes a compelling exploration of unexpected friendships and hard choices.*

Karen F. Uhlmann's ruminative novel *Intersections* is about tough family relationships and difficult mercies.

When a girl is killed at an intersection, Charlotte, a passerby, suspects that her daughter, Libby, who suffers from OCD and is an addict, might have been driving the Prius that hit her. She keeps this to herself. Ed, a police officer who is suspended pending an investigation, also noticed the car and determines to find justice while he's on leave. When Charlotte and Ed meet, it prompts reckonings about what information to reveal.

In this compelling exploration of unexpected friendships, intersections are both literal and representative: One is the location of the girl's death, but the points at which people's needs run into risks are also focal. Charlotte's situation is intriguing because of the disparity between her job and her private life. She's a beautiful lifestyle designer who helps her wealthy clientele acquire tasteful art, goods, and travel. But at home, her marriage is strained because she thinks that she's grown invisible to her husband. She's also pregnant by an ex-lover and her finances are draining because of the cost of Libby's therapy. Ed, meanwhile, is a quintessential dedicated policeman whose wife wishes that he'd retire and whose adult daughter's infertility weighs on him.

In Charlotte and Ed's conversations, the comfort of being strangers allows them to skip over pretenses and share their deeper concerns. Details about their home lives are revealed in heartening stages. That each one keeps their platonic relationship a secret hints at their shared loneliness. The book's secondary characters are less fleshed out, though, including Libby, whose anorexia and other struggles are encountered from her mother's anguished perspective alone.

The winter holiday setting enhances the story through jubilant contrasts: There are festivities in the city, and other people carry on with their everyday lives. At the same time, Charlotte is overwhelmed by her inner conflict over lying to her spouse. Her worries about Libby's possible involvement in the hit-and-run are a dark undercurrent, though they lessen as the book progresses. And Ed's comfortable but perplexing (to him) marriage takes uncertain turns when his wife makes a crucial choice without him. Later, inevitable disclosures result in life-altering decisions, some of which feel abrupt. Still, the story is nuanced in exploring the many fractures that push its cast's relationships apart and the remaining loyalties that buoy them.

In the provocative novel *Intersections*, a policeman and a guilt-ridden mother bond over their complicated family lives and make peace with their choices.

KAREN RIGBY (January 21, 2025)

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